

THE WHITE APRON.



It might be a curious question, worth asking and ascertaining, of persons whose names are famous in history or prominent among the heroic traditions of war, how large is the proportion composed of those who have greatness thrust upon them, compared to individuals who, by the virtues of true courage, perseverance, boldness, and sagacity, have achieved it for themselves?

It is at all events one that rises to the mind after hearing the story of Johanna Stegen, a fortunate milkmaid of Lüneberg, who, by no particular effort of her own, save a forced compliance, rose to fame, ultimate elevation in rank, and extreme prosperity.

In 1813 the French, greatly to the disgust of the conquered, still occupied Lüneberg. A time however was at hand when the power that deemed itself all but omnipotent, was to totter, and presently fall down amidst the well-earned execrations of all Europe.

But it is the story of the fortunate milkmaid which is the object of this paper, not the progress and termination of the first Napoleon's wars.

On the outskirts of Lüneberg there stood then, and very possibly still remains, a little settlement of milch farm-houses. The inhabitants of this village, which is called Grimm, carried on a brisk trade by supplying the lacteal fluid in large quantities to Lüneberg, which city depended mainly on these farms for that important article of diet. Our heroine, Johanna, was employed in one of these rural dairies, and was, in short, just a milkmaid and nothing more. Truth compels her biographer to state that there was little enough of the picturesque in our Johanna's personal appearance, and that she had even more than the usual bucolic attributes of robust health and florid bloom, charms accompanied moreover by locks whose redness was a fact above all contradiction.

But Fate, the mighty, can overcome all; and, for anything we know, could make even an empress, of a short, stout, red-headed dairy-woman.

Little indeed Johanna dreamed when—her milk-pails slung from her square shoulders—she issued forth on a

certain morning, the exact date of which the present biographer fairly owns to have been unable to ascertain; little did she dream or think—supposing she was even in the habit of thinking, to which practice luckily for their health and vigour, milk-maids are not prone—that fortune was waiting alily, in no far-off nook, to invest her with all that the heart of woman is said—mind, only said—to love best, viz., rank, homage, wealth, and fame.

By Johanna's side, on that memorable morning, came forth at the same time, similarly laden, a being, gentler and fairer, though in all likelihood no better nurtured or cultivated than her companion. This young person was an assistant dairy-maid, and in this narrative, with the courteous reader's leave, shall be called "Caroline."

These girls were bound on their usual errand, taking to Lüneberg supplies of rich creamy fluid. They chatted and sang and laughed on their road from Grimm to Lüneberg, a distance of probably not more than a mile and a half. Suddenly, as they were nearing the city, Johanna halted.

"What dost thou stare at?" says Caroline, in her guttural German. "I see nothing." (*Ich sehe nichts.*)

"Canst hear neither, perhaps," answered Johanna, raising her hand and pointing.

And now indeed Caroline heard sharp and loud reports, which gave her an idea, expressed curtly enough.

"Fighting, eh?" quoth Caroline.

"Come on," answered Johanna; "the milk must go to Lüneberg, if Boney himself be there! We're late enough now, I tell you." For Caroline showed symptoms of turning back towards Grimm, a tendency to cowardism which plainly proves her to have had no pretensions to be a heroine, and which ought to reconcile us to her ultimate fate. "Come on, I tell you, fool! they won't hurt us!"

"No; but the bullets may. Hark! there they go—pop! pop! pop! Johanna, never mind the milk—let the people want their breakfasts for once."

But, arguing thus, they still walked on; and, as it proved, marched right into the lion's mouth. When it was too late, even for women as they were, to retreat, they found themselves right in the midst of Prussian and Russian soldiers, who, up to that moment, had been pouring their fire against Lüneberg. There was, however, just then, a momentary forced cessation of hostilities on the

side of the assaulting party, and, in fact, the French were rapidly gaining the advantage. An accident had occurred. Close before Johanna and Caroline, a cart laden with cartridges had been overturned, and its contents were strewn on the ground. No one was near it save a dead trooper or two, and one who was just expiring. Caroline, tender and thoughtful woman, ran up to this wretch, and held a draught of milk to his dying lips, but Johanna claps her hands, crying out—

“Roudeaux ! roudeaux ! Come quick, and help me, Caroline !”

She took the cartridges for rouleaux of coin, which they somewhat resemble. Johanna and her companion both wore large white aprons with big pockets, not like those of grisettes on the stage, but good substantial ones, fit to hold a half-quartern loaf. Johanna filled these as quickly as she could pick her spoil up, quite oblivious of the bullets from Lüneberg, which hailed round her—as oblivious of them, in her thirst for getting quickly rich, as was Caroline, from a better, holier motive. In after-times, I think the look of gratitude which beamed from the dying soldier's eyes, the broken words of blessing which dropped from his white lips, must have been a dearer, more blessed memory to the heart of her, who, naturally timid, forgot that timidity under the influence of woman's holiest promptings of tenderness and mercy, than the subsequent homage, the brilliant fortune showered on the being who, with eager eyes and avaricious grasp, was busily employed in cramming her pockets with that, which indeed ultimately proved more valuable towards her aggrandisement, than the gold for which she took the packages strewn around.

But Johanna's career of greedy acquirement is speedily stopped. A Prussian colonel rides hastily up. He has no idea of the girl's self-deception. He hastily dubs her in his mind—a mind heated by the excitement of action—as an ardent heroine aspiring to aid his troops in their temporary distress.

“My brave girl ! those pockets will not hold enough ; fill your apron. Quick, here, young woman !” (to Caroline, who still knelt by the dying), “do the same—as one goes, the other can come back !”

There was no murmur of disobedience possible. Here was the terrible Prussian flaming with loud voice, stern in command, indisputable in authority. Johanna was quite unconscious of the admiration with which the great man, whom she took for a general at least, viewed her. Fear alone, made the girl obey, and indeed, as her retreat was by this time cut off by a body of advancing troops, to go back was impossible, to go forward inadvisable. Her acceptance of the duty imposed, was, however, as prompt and ready as if the action had really emanated from herself. She was always sturdy and bustling, and not less so now, when bullets whistled around, and she was in mortal fear. Quickly she filled her apron, and as quickly ran with her burden, to the poor fellows, who for want of them, were being rapidly picked off by the French fire, man by man. As she returned, Caroline performed the same good office ; so, backwards and forwards amidst a rattling fire, mid

volleys of no less fiery oaths, midst blood, carnage, the groans of the dying, the carcasses of the dead, did Johanna Stegen, and Caroline Bürger, carry pail after pail of cartridges, distributing them to the troops, till the day advanced, and the allies had gained the victory—gained it, as all to a man declared, by the heroic conduct of a woman—that woman, Johanna Stegen.

Caroline, her pale face heated by the danger and stern excitement of the scene, equally arduous, equally—even more generously—oblivious of danger, is permitted, unnoticed, unthanked, to make her way back as best she can to Grimm, there to amaze the pastoral inhabitants with the recital of that adventurous and blood-stained morning.

Our Johanna was not too much overpowered by bashfulness to remain on the field, waiting for applause and thanks. She had wit enough to see that she was appreciated beyond what she had merited. However, just then, every one was too busy with rejoicing and hopes of plunder, to notice her, whom they considered the victress of the day.

As, weary and disappointed, she was about to return to Grimm, the same colonel who had directed the milk-girl's efforts, rode up to her, hot, and ready to drop off his horse with fatigue.

“My girl—quick—your apron—give to me. Not a word—off with it—that's right—now, your name—Johanna—Johanna what ? Johanna Stegen—So ! Now, my lady, onward ! Stragglers fall back !”

And thereupon, one of the stragglers, who could not comprehend what that grand, terrible, fierce soldier could want with her apron, now half-dirty, stained with blood and the moisture of her weary brow, fell back at the word of command, and presently, changing her mind about Grimm, she slowly followed in the rear of the army, who acknowledged her as its preserver, and who by this time had hoisted her apron in front of the troops, as an ensign and emblem of how a great victory had been won.

Arrived at Lüneberg, our milkmaid—who, as yet, knew not she might place the adjective fortunate before her name—went at once to the house of her mother, who (a poor widow) gained hard bread and little enough salt by charring and washing. She feared, perhaps, to return to Grimm, where heroism was likely to kick the beam when weighed against the loss of sundry pails of milk, wasted or seized by thirsty fellows as lawful spoil, and for which she had not the means of paying. She claimed the shelter of the maternal roof, and related her adventure to her mother, not without many reproaches on the part of that virtuous matron, for interfering amongst a parcel of rapacious soldiers, who ate, drank, and devoured that night at the expense of Lüneberg.

But Johanna's triumph rose next day with the sun. The King of Prussia took possession of the city, and the first act of royalty, was to make a proclamation for the owner of the White Apron, who was by no means backward in creeping forth from her obscurity.

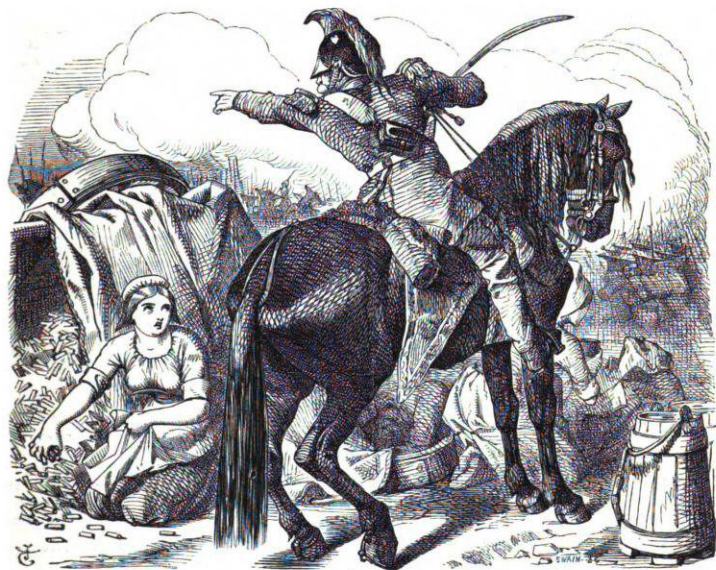
That night a grand banquet was held at the Schloss Lüneberg, and Johanna sat at the monarch's

right hand. Robust and florid as she was, no belle attracted such universal notice or admiration as this fortunate milkmaid. Her glowing hair was called golden, her ruddy cheeks blooming, and her form was admired for its strength, if it was not exactly extolled for grace. Success is your true beautifier—the elixir which bestows youth and beauty, and which fails in its effect only when the sun of Fortune sets. The girdle of

Good Luck once thrown round the thickest waist, it becomes to every beholder as slender as Venus's own, and those whom the blind goddess has mystified by the bandage of her own eyes, are, at any time, ready to swear black is white, or, as in Johanna's case, red is yellow.

And amidst all this, Caroline's name was not heard.

One heart at least was captivated by this heroine



in spite of herself. The big Prussian colonel must have his fancy captivated by this close approximation to the heroic maid of his heated brain. Among the toasts drank to Johanna Stegen, his response was the loudest, his praise the most broadly expressed.

But—every medal has its reverse side—what a pity!

In the midst of all these rejoicings, and just as great things were in contemplation for Johanna, who seems to have been regarded as a second Joan of Arc, just when one may suppose the Prussian colonel was beginning to find leisure to prosecute his romantic suit—Lo! the French returned and retook Lüneberg. Dire event! which the poor Lünebergers deplored, and which was positive ruin to our heroine, whose temporary elevation had served to point her out as a mark for the vengeance of the infuriated French soldiery. Johanna, thrown down from her lofty pedestal, was, metaphorically speaking, obliged to grovel in the mud, and literally, might have been trampled to death, except for hiding herself, which she did

for many days, in a dark dismal cellar, indebted for sustenance solely to the good offices of neighbours, and to Caroline, who brought her in milk from Grimm, and who, unnoticed and unrewarded, was no doubt much happier than the heroine cowering in her dismal cellar, expecting hourly death—or worse.

But this terrible condition, which lasted many bitter days, was terminated at length by the report of a large body of Prussians advancing on Lüneberg; and now, as the French at last evacuated Lüneberg, our heroine once more emerged from her obscurity, and threw herself at the king's feet.

Her sorrows ended there. Her merits were at once recognised; she was patronised by some of the female connections of her Prussian admirer. Following the army subsequently into Prussia, she was at once placed on the full-pay of a colonel, and sent to a pension to be educated for her future rank in life—a Prussian nobleman's spouse. Henceforth the life of Johanna Stegen became one of uninterrupted prosperity. At the close of the war

she married the man, whose peremptory orders were in reality the cause of her being famous. History tells us no more of her. Did education refine her? Did she ever think of Caroline Bürger, in the latter's obscurity, or aid the comrade who shared her peril, but not her good fortune? It is believed not. She whom we have called Caroline lived and died, obscure and humble, perhaps not less happy; even her real name was not known by the old inhabitant of the Schloss Lüneberg, from whose lips this little narrative was gathered years ago, and who could boast of having both seen and spoken to, the famous heroine of Lüneberg, Johanna Stegen, by no means the first, nor in all likelihood the last, to whom fortune has called in a fit of caprice, and loaded with unmerited favours.

H. J.



SEBASTOPOL VILLA.



ALWAYS do my best to earn my welcome at those houses where I—fortunate bachelor that I am—enjoy the privilege of being able to drop in when I like, of an evening, for a cup of tea and a pleasant chat. So that—happening to be present when the new microscope, which my friend Jones had ordered as a present for his wife, came home; and hearing that lady express a wish for a bottle full of the green slime of stagnant ponds, “in which the dear animalcules and infusoria, about which Mr. Gosse writes so charmingly,” are to be found—you may be sure that I took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded me of making myself acceptable; and promised my hostess that I would forthwith obtain for her a liberal supply of those interesting creatures to try her long coveted instrument upon; and early the following morning I started off, like a man of my word, to procure them.

I can recal the time when I could have got what I wanted within half a mile of the Marble Arch, but those days have long since passed away. I remembered that when travelling by railway I had passed through fields in the neighbourhood of—let us call the suburb—Whichested, in which green ponds were still to be found, and thitherward I directed

my course. An omnibus carried me as far as the turnpike-gate, and having strolled on, about half a mile along the high road, I came to a lane. I turned down this lane, and lo! I was in the country. Looking northward—I could see nothing but fields and trees; looking eastwards and westwards—nothing but trees and fields. I could not look to the south very far, because the railway embankment shut out the prospect. I might have been a hundred miles from London for anything of its noise, and bustle, and smoke, that I could perceive in that quiet spot. The hedges were in bud; the birds were singing. There was a good crop of grass that would soon be mowed, in the field to my right. Over the stile on the other side a man in a smock frock was ploughing, and yet I was barely five miles from Oxford Street!

If I had gone there to moralise I could have done so at great length, but I had come to catch animalcules for Mrs. Jones, and looking about I soon saw a pond—a green-coated, rush-fringed hole, with a small quantity of dirty water in it, a willow-tree at one end, and two boys fishing for efts with a worm tied to a piece of worsted, at the other. I quickly filled the bottles, which I had provided with the richest alime, according to my instructions, and having added to these by purchasing from the juveniles a brace of the most loathsome of the reptiles they had captured, for my friend's aquarium, I retraced my steps; and Mrs. Jones held microscopic *séances* every evening for a week.

I am quite incapable of describing the wonders that the learned lady disclosed to us. I only know that, at last, we got a little tired of them—that the treasured green alime bottle, being left about one day, "baby" got hold of it, and drank some—that the efts crawled out of their tank, and after having been hunted for, high and low, in vain, for a fortnight, were found at last baked quite dry in a crack in the hearth-stone—and that about three months afterwards, the animalcule mania having broken out again, I was asked if I *would* be so very kind as to fetch a fresh supply.

Again I put my bottles in my pocket; again I paced along the Whichstead road; again I turned the corner of the lane that had led me to my pond, fully expecting to find it as I had left it, with its willow tree at one end, and its two boys fishing for efts at the other, and, lo! I was in a town. Looking northward, I could see nothing but houses—houses built, and houses in course of erection; looking eastwards and westwards, nothing but houses in course of erection, and houses built. Looking to the south, the railway embankment shut out the prospect as before. The hedges were gone, so were the song-birds; the sharp click of the bricklayers' trowels was now the prevalent sound. The grass-field was turned into a square, laid out with flower-beds, and fenced with an iron railing. A bright, new, flaring public-house, just finished, with a huge flag waving from the roof, stood where my friend in the smock frock had "whistled at the plough." Upon the very spot where I had seen the largest

and most repulsive of my efts drawn wriggling from his muddy lair, was erected the threshold of "SEBASTOPOL VILLA!"

As I have to explain how this remarkably sudden change came about, the sooner I set about doing so the better. The land belonged to the trustees of a Charity, and they wanted to make money of it. Mr. Specie, the great contractor, had plenty of money, and wanted to sink some of it in land. The deeds were executed, the consideration paid, and to Peter Specie, Esq., was duly conveyed the grass-field, and the ploughed land, with their, and all and every of their fences, walls, ditches, water-courses, mines, minerals, tenements, and hereditaments; and also the pond and the willow-tree, with their, and all and every of their efts, newts, rushes, tadpoles, animalcules, caterpillars, and earwigs thereunto belonging or in any way pertaining: to have and to hold unto him the said Peter Specie and his heirs for ever.

Having obtained possession, the new landlord stuck up, upon every part of his property that could be seen from the road, huge boards, upon which was legibly painted the information that eligible plots of land were to be let on building leases. What says the old saw!—"Fools build houses for wise men to live in." Peter Specie did not build houses—but he took mortgages from those who did. One Joe Price, a carpenter, was his victim in this instance, who, after mortgaging the house floor by floor, in order to complete it, and running it up as slightly as possible, found in the end, that if it was let as soon as the paint was dry, and the rent was paid punctually, from that day forward to the expiration of his lease, he owed as much as the house was worth: Mr. Specie knew better than to let him owe more. Fortunately for poor Joe, a tenant *was* found soon after the paint became dry, and his name was Honiton Smith, of the Inner Temple, Esq., Barrister-at-law.

Honiton Smith had a fair practice at the bar,—as practices go now-a-days; and having arranged preliminaries with a pretty girl in his own position in life, he married her at once, like a sensible fellow, instead of wearing out her heart, and her roses, with a long engagement. But, unlike a sensible fellow, instead of taking her to substantial lodgings, where they could save up capital for commencing housekeeping, he took Sebastopol Villa, and hired his furniture from Veneer, Shoddy, & Co., on the plan of paying for it by instalments. Pretty Katey, his wife, in her joy at its radiance, of course aspired to have a house-warming, and Honiton Smith gave way; but "mind," he said severely, laying aside the man and assuming the householder,—“mind you do not invite too many.” Katey assured him that it should “only be a little dance,” and there the discussion ended.

We all know what “only a little dance” means. Poor Katey! She calculated that half the elderly people she invited for propriety's sake would decline; but they, “rather than offend the young folks,” committed self-sacrifice and came. Then Katey discovered that twenty dancing girls had accepted, and that she had only invited

fifteen men upon whom she could count as partners for them. Honiton had asked a number of clients and brother barristers,—persons of no use whatever in a ball-room,—without telling her, and the question whether there would be room and supper enough for all became a pertinent one. The eventful night arrived, and a crush of guests poured into the drawing-room of Sebastopol Villa such as Joe Price had never contemplated in settling the strength of his joints. At the height of the festivities,—when good little Katey's nervousness had worn off, and she began to think that really things were not going so badly, after all,—in the middle of the last gallop before supper,—when the jellies and creams and cakes, the chickens with their legs and wings cut off, and tied on again with blue ribbons were laid out for that repast,—when the hired plate and glass were shining their brightest,—when the table was, as the man from the confectioner's declared, "quite a picture to look at,"—when the dance was going on gaily above, and the first instalment of "married people" had just taken their places at the festive board,—*smash!* came a boot and a black-trousered leg through the ceiling, close to the chandelier; and then, *SMASH!!—CRASH!!!—* down came chandelier, ceiling, and all upon the supper table, breaking it down and burying all its glittering and savoury contents in one mass of chalky desolation.

Words cannot paint the scene that followed. The ladies shrieked and fled into the garden, thinking that the house itself was coming down. It was as much as three men could do to drag the unfortunate youth, whose vigorous dancing had finished Mr. Price's flooring, out of his hole. No one would enter drawing or dining-room again, and it was some time before cabs were procured, as a solution to the confusion, and the dispirited assembly melted away. The next day Price was sent for; Smith, the crest-fallen, would have it out with him, at any rate; but to his indignation it was the builder who assumed the injured innocent. What had they bin up to? Darning! What business had they to get darning in his house? Fifty pound houses like that warn't built for darning! Worn't there a clause in their agreement agin balls, and parties, and sich like goings on. No, there worn't? Yes, but there was though, and that Mr. Smith should find. Honiton had forgotten all about the prohibitory covenant, and had to pay for the necessary repairs out of his own pocket. Mr. Price was right: Sebastopol Villa was clearly "not built for darning."

The builder's account for a new ceiling, floor, and joists mounted up to 40*l.*; the confectioner's bill for broken glass and damaged silver was 32*l.*, besides the cost of the supper which was spoilt. When all this was paid, poor Smith had but little of his savings left to go towards making up the 50*l.*, the first instalment of the 500*l.* due to Messrs. Veneer, Shoddy, & Co. I have said that the dining-room table was broken down by the fall of the ceiling. The fracture disclosed that it was a rotten, worthless article, just French polished up for sale. A respectable upholsterer was called in, and it soon became clear that all

the furniture in the house was of the same description. The chairs broke when sat upon, the carpets wore out, the curtains faded, and in little more than a year distressing signs of seediness appeared in every room. Smith expostulated with the great furnishing firm, and the great furnishing firm turned round upon him insolently, and demanded what right he had to find fault, when his last instalment was in arrear? Smith persisted, and Veneer & Co. blustered, threatening to sue him. Smith took heart of grace, swore he would defend the action, and dared them to proceed. Veneer & Co. were cowed, and eventually released their entire claim upon Smith's father paying them 300*l.* The real worth of the goods they had sold was not three hundred pence!

But the troubles of the newly-married pair did not begin or end here. Winter set in, and they soon found that Sebastopol Villa was neither wind, rain, nor cold proof. It looked very pretty in summer. Its plate-glass windows were imposing; its stuccoed front was unimpeachable; its marble mantlepieces and fancy grates were apparently first-rate. But then the wet came through the roof, the doors warped and let in the draught, and the sashes of the windows would not fit. Added to this, the walls were very, very thin, and afforded little shelter against the piercing north-east wind, to which the house was exposed. Moreover, being papered before they were quite dry, the paper now began to peel off in strips, which hung down, and waved about mournfully in the currents of air that rushed in and out of the rooms. Poor Katey Smith did not jump for joy in her drawing-room now.

Christmas came, and Joe Price himself was in the Gazette. He had tried other building speculations, had run up other "jerry-built" houses, and had failed utterly, hopelessly. Mr. Peter Specie seized his houses, including Sebastopol Villa, for the ground rent, had them patched up, and let them to people who believed in cheap tenements. Honiton Smith did not long continue his tenant. He saw with grief that his good little wife's cheek grew paler and paler every day.

One morning as he was taking leave of her to go into his chambers, he put his arm round her, and, drawing the gentle face close to his own, said, softly, "Katey, are you very fond of house-keeping?"

"No, dear!" she said, looking down, tying and unttying knots in her apron cords, "not very."

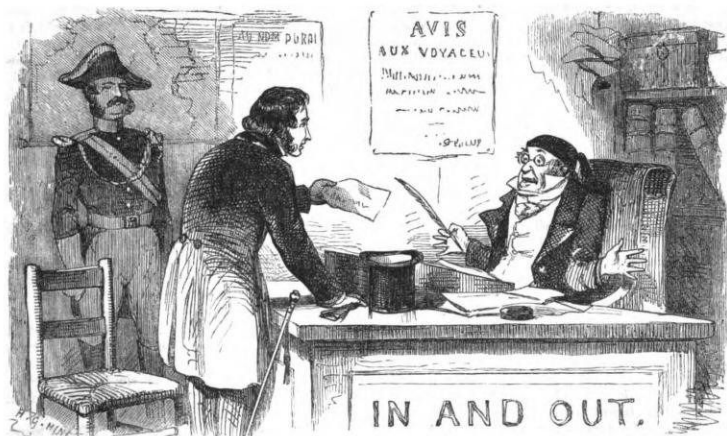
"Should you much mind our giving up this place, and going into lodgings for a year or two, until we can afford to hire a really good house, and furnish it comfortably?"

"O, Honey!" was the joyous reply, "I'd have asked you to do so months ago, but I feared it might pain you."

Within two years the Smiths had a house of their own again, thanks to Honiton's increasing Parliamentary practice; but you may depend upon it that it was not built by a Price, nor furnished by a Veneer, Shoddy, & Co.

Sebastopol Villa is To BE LET. If the public will take my advice, it will remain so.

ALBANY FONBLANQUE, JUNR.



A TOURIST'S SOUVENIR.

From the days of the Patriarch Joseph down to those in which we, "the latest seed of time," have the hap to live, there have been prisoners released, or escaped, to end their days in liberty and honour. Plenty of them have left to posterity the record of their wrongs. Some in song; some in slip-slop; some in words that burn; some in twaddle so anti-phlogistic as well-nigh to make the yawning reader curse the hour of their liberation. There are, too, names enough of saints in the diurnal calendar of prisoners to fling a halo of interest round the mere name of captive. Captives, be it observed, not gaol-birds—I speak without thought of Newgate or petty larceny, Dick Turpin or Jack Sheppard. It may be that the brightest luminaries of that hagiology emerged from the darkness of captivity, only to flash for a moment in the eyes of men, ere they set for ever upon the scaffold. But there are plenty of stars, of no contemptible magnitude, whose light has come forth to shine undimmed by the damps of the dungeon. Galileo, Tasso, Lovelace, the Prophet Daniel, Lavallette, Baron Trench, the seven bishops, Silvio Pellico—(I have no turn for chronological arrangement)—all managed, somehow or other, to get safely out of durance, and die peacefully in their beds. His Imperial Majesty Louis Napoleon III. spent some portion of his existence in the solitude of Ham. The Baron Poerio is—long may he remain so—an escaped prisoner.

Paulo minor—so am I. And it happened in this wise:—

In the year 1847, in the reign of that constitutional French monarch who subsequently retired into private life and a foreign country under the unassuming appellation of Mr. Smith, I was in my youth, and in my first travel, on the Rhine.

Youth, first travel, and the Rhine! Let the reader of experience be grateful, that even on such texts, I abstain from preaching.

At Wiesbaden. And at Wiesbaden it happened—no matter how—that I found it necessary to take steps to replenish an exhaust—wanted money, in short. And so, with letters of credit in hand, I betook myself to the bureau of M. Junius Merlé, named in that document as the correspondent of the London bankers who undertook the charge of keeping my modest "account."

My name is—let me see. For the purposes of this narrative my name is Temple, Henry Temple. I am going to lie a little in the matter of names, but, upon my honour, I stop there: all beyond shall be true as gospel. To those who know me, even my pseudonyms will be transparent enough. To those who don't, no matter.

M. Junius Merlé sat behind his counter expectant of custom. Except in the great capitals, bankers' establishments on the continent are, as travellers know, rarely mounted on the same scale to which we are accustomed at home; and in M. Merlé's bureau, which comprised a space of some twelve feet square, there was no appearance or symptom of a clerk, unless, indeed, Madame Merlé, who sat quietly knitting behind the farthest corner of the same (and only) counter, was to be suspected, from what followed, of occasionally assisting her better half in that capacity.

There is, for us English, no disguising our nationality, were we ever so disposed. Before I had got out three syllables of the French harangue, carefully prepared for the exposition of my necessities, M. Merlé was down upon me with a few words of indifferent but polite English, and holding out his hand for my letter of credit.

As he read it a curious sort of smile stole over M. Merlé's face. He looked up from the letter at me, and down again from me at the letter, and at last he broke into an audible chuckle. Madame Merlé, attracted by a behaviour probably unusual, sidled up to her husband and stole a glance over his shoulder at the credentials which seemed to move his risibility. Strange! the very same curious smile crept over the placid, blonde German countenance of the lady, and she looked at her husband, and he looked at her; and with a simultaneous "Ach! mein Gott! wie sonderbar!" they stood chuckling undisguisedly at each other.

"What the devil are they grinning at?" said I, half aloud, to myself.

"Und sie heissen wahrlich—Ach! I forget!—Dat is your name truly, Heinrich Tempel?" said M. Merlé, with the tip of his massively-ringed finger pointed to the line where I appeared so designated.

"Of course it is," said I. "Is there anything funny in it?"

"Ach! no," said M. Merlé, still with the remnant of a smile, "but we know well here dat name."

"Indeed. How so?"

"He live here, Heinrich Tempel, dree, four, five year. He sheat—vat you call swindel—all the world, and he vanish away sudden, and make at Frankfurt the fraudulent bankrupt for—ach! Himmel! sebhenty-four tousand gulden!"

I interposed some common-place expression of regret that one bearing my name should have so misconducted himself.

"Vell," said M. Merlé, consolingly, "he vas not you. He do this now seven year since. He live here in all society. He was a man most charming, most delightful. He speak all languages. He have two bankers in your London—how you call them? Berrys and Barker. He was a Jew—"

"I never heard of a Jew so named," said I. "What was he like?"

"I know not. He was a Jew for all dat. He have at dat time fifty-seven year. A small man, dat wear a perruque, and make trips, *des petite pas*, de leetel steps ven he valk. Ach, vell!" repeated M. Merlé, turning short off to business as a fresh customer entered, and stood awaiting his turn of attention. "He vas not you. How much money vill you want?"

I journeyed with the results of that interview to Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Baden-Baden, Straßbourg, down the Rhine again, and up the Moselle to Treves. And all this while, saving that I had mentioned in a letter home the misdeeds of my namesake, and had received, in a reply from my sister, the expression of a hope that I should not be exposed to any annoyance on his account, troubled my head no farther about the former Henry Temple and his rascalities.

It was at the fall of a fine evening on the 22nd September that, travelling solitary in a private "leathern conveyency," I reached the gates of the old fortified town of Luxembourg, leaving at the entrance my passport, which was there demanded for the first time since my landing at Ostend, and which was returned to me at my

hotel, either that night or early the following morning, without a word of comment.

And here I should say a word about this passport. The Foreign Office passes, with which all wise men now travel, were at that time much more expensive and much less used than at present, and mine had been granted by the Belgian Consul in London and duly *visé* for the countries through which I intended to pass. It contained, of course, a "signalement," most of whose particulars would have applied as well to anybody else as to myself; but it was, at any rate, strictly correct in stating me to be *thirty-one* years of age, five feet ten or eleven inches high, and that the colour of my beard, or so much of it as I then wore, was "roussâtre." It had not taken the trouble to notice that I wore spectacles, and bore a slight permanent scar on one cheek. Startling fidelity was never a characteristic of these written likenesses.

Luxembourg—(passport again demanded at the French frontier town of Thionville, and returned with bows and politeness)—Metz, Verdun, Châlons sur Marne, unmolested slept I at each of these places; and early on the 26th of September, descended at the excellent hotel of the Lion d'Or, at Rheims. On the morning of the 27th, I leaned against the porte-cochère of the hotel, tranquilly smoking my cigar and revolving the means of most speedily and comfortably reaching the crowning attraction of my trip—the yet unvisited Paris. There was no railway. The coupé of the diligence was engaged for three or four days to come. How was I to go? Fate stepped in and moved the adjournment of the debate.

Fate—in the shape of a heavily-moustached "bon gendarme"—who, glancing at me as he passed, to exchange a word or two with the people in the bureau of the hotel, returned, stopped, bowed, and spoke:

"Was he right in supposing that he addressed M. Temple?"

He was.

"M. Henri Temple, perhaps?"

The same.

"Did Monsieur happen to have a passport?"

Of course, Monsieur had one.

"Would Monsieur allow him a sight of it?"

Certainly, if it gave him any satisfaction. Monsieur would step up-stairs and fetch it.

Ah! no; he could not think of it: he would accompany Monsieur.

So he did; and I don't think there was much belonging to Monsieur that did not fall within the range of his observation, during the two minutes which he passed in Monsieur's apartment.

"Would Monsieur," he said, when he got my passport, "give himself the trouble to step with him over the way for a little moment?"

Certainly Monsieur would,—though he didn't a bit understand the meaning of it all.

"De quelle religion êtes vous, Monsieur?" said he, as he passed by the glorious west front of the cathedral.

Monsieur was a Protestant of the Church of England. (What the deuce could it matter to the gendarme?)

"Monsieur n'est donc pas Juif?"

Then, at once, the truth flashed upon me. I was supposed to be my namesake, of whom M. Junius Merlé had told me at Wiesbaden.

"Aha," said I, "maintenant j'y suis. La chose commence à s'expliquer!" The thing was too absurd, and I laughed in the gendarme's face. He smiled, too, but not heartily; and the fact that I laughed seemed to puzzle him hugely.

"Par ici, Monsieur! Donnez-vous la peine de passer!" And through a little door in a little street we entered a little room, where, busily writing at a table, and apparently with no mind to be interrupted, sat a little dry wiry man, of rather more than middle age,—no other as I afterwards learned than M. Mongrolle (I give his real name), judge of some court or other, and, I suppose, the proper person to attend to such cases as mine in the absence of the Substitut du Procureur du Roi, who happened that day to be out à la chasse. M. Mongrolle wrote on for a few moments without apparent consciousness of my presence; and then, pushing his papers slightly aside and impatiently turning round to me, as to a sort of bore to whom he was obliged to attend, and of whom he meant to get rid as quickly as possible, demanded shortly, "Well, sir, what have you got to say?" "To what?" said I. "What am I called on to answer?"

The charge was shortly stated—swindling to a considerably larger extent than M. Merlé had mentioned.

"You have heard?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Henri Temple?"

"Yes."

"What have you to say?"

"Simply that I am not the Henri Temple in question."

He looked at a paper which he held in his hand, and at me. "Mais le signalement est le vôtre!" Would he allow me to look at it for a moment?—He complied, but not with the best grace in the world. In was in MS., on part of a sheet of ordinary writing-paper, and had been forwarded from Luxembourg. I glanced rapidly over it. In a few particulars, the colour of the eyes and the average (moyen) size of nose and mouth, the signalement agreed with my own; but I took the liberty, after narrating what had passed between me and M. Merlé, of observing to M. Mongrolle that there was an important difference in height between me and the person therein described; that the latter was set down as a person "qui doit être Israélite," of fifty-one, not thirty-one, years of age; "qui portait une perruque grise, et qui faisait des petits pas en marchant." M. Mongrolle evidently had not time to see the weight of my objections. The difference of twenty years in age did not matter a pin—"ne faisait rien,"—it was very easy to cast off a perruque, or to affect a particular style of walking. The difference in height and the Israelitish physiognomy were arguments which M. Mongrolle did not condescend to combat at all. He treated them with contemptuous silence, only repeating obstinately, "Le signalement est le vôtre." Things began to look serious. I called M. Mongrolle's attention to the

date of my passport, compared with that of the fraudulent bankruptcy; to the signatures of two German bankers already attached to my letter of credit. I offered to produce all the bills of all the hotels at which I had slept, including Wiesbaden and Frankfurt, to show that the good people at those places had enjoyed ample opportunities of recognising their victimiser, if I were indeed he. It did not occur to me at the moment to add, as was the fact, that my name, "Henry Temple, Esq.," was painted at full length on my portmanteau, in letters so large and white as to have frequently elicited jocular remark from fellow-travellers, and that such a tempting of recognition was hardly the act of one who had anything to fear from the consequences. It would not have aided me, had I thought of it. I might as well have whistled jigs to a milestone. M. Mongrolle had no intention of examining anything save the Luxembourg signalement.

"Le nom est le vôtre! le signalement est le vôtre!" shrieked the now somewhat excited magistrate, persisting manfully in his lie: "You must be detained!"

"Am I then," said I, innocently, "to consider myself as under surveillance?"

"Of course," said M. Mongrolle, curtly, and turning to his interrupted writing.

"Pig-headed old fool!" muttered I, as I emerged from the bureau. "Well! It's only a policeman in the distance, for a day or two, after all!"

In five minutes from that time I was in the Public Prison of the good city of Rheims, with the gendarme, the gaoler, the gaoler's wife and daughter, and two or three smaller officials of the House of Durance clustering round me in the lobby!

No wonder. I was such a novelty. They had not caught an Englishman since the coronation of Charles X., when an English clergyman who came to witness the ceremony, with a passport not altogether en règle, was unceremoniously lodged in this same prison, being allowed as a favour, to witness, through a grating, the procession on its way to the Cathedral.

My portmanteau and dressing-case were fetched from my hotel, and carefully examined by the gendarme and the gaoler, M. Bernard (I give that worthy man's real name), before they were allowed to be removed to the apartment destined to my use. I think the scrutiny satisfied the gendarme that they had caught the wrong bird. He had evidently had his doubts all along; but, from that moment forward, he treated me like a friend whom he felt to be ill-used, and whom he would be glad to help if he could. M. Bernard was astonished chiefly at the amount of my wardrobe.

"My God! has he got shirts enough?" he ejaculated, as my stock of body-linen was unfolded, piece by piece, before his wondering eyes.

At the top of the prison, with barred windows on the outer side, "giving" on to the Place in front of the Cathedral, and with a series of numbered doors on the inner-side affording entrance to a corresponding range of cells, more or less closet-like, runs a long corridor, extending from end to end of the building. I was formally installed in

No. 12, a stone-walled and floored room of some twelve feet by ten, containing simply a coarse truckle-bed, fairly clean, a rush-bottomed chair, and a small deal table. My door, I was told, would be locked from 8 P. M. till 8 A. M., but between those hours, free use of the corridor outside was allowed to me.

I had not been there a quarter of an hour before every man, woman, and child, connected with the service of the establishment, had been to see me, and "take my likeness." But without a grain or shadow of roughness or incivility. A slightly puzzled expression, half of doubt, half of sympathy; and from most a kindly word or two. Though I say it, who should not, I *did* behave like a Briton. I flatter myself that our insular reputation for *sangfroid* lost nothing in my hands. Excessively astonished I certainly was; but,—I know not why,—trifles at-home, the absence of the "Times" at breakfast, or some similar nothing, have often discomposed my temper more seriously than did this really serious misfortune. I was as cool as a cucumber. I unpacked, I arranged my dressing and writing materials; in ten minutes, I had given my four stone walls an air of positive comfort, and as Auguste, the turnkey, and Suzanne, the prison housemaid, were looking on, I whistled carelessly as I worked. Auguste and Suzanne could make nothing of me, and went their way down stairs, much marvelling.

As soon as I was left alone, I set to work to write. I wrote to the English Foreign Secretary, to an Ambassador at Paris, to M. Junius Merlé at Wiesbaden, to all sorts of people besides. Much good all my writing did me!

Then, feeling that I had done all that could be done at the moment, I came out tranquilly to take the air in the corridor; and, lo! there was balm in Gilead, I was not even alone. Three other houses in my street were tenanted; and their occupants, who had evidently been discussing the new arrival, and watching for his appearance, lost no time in making my acquaintance. Two old men and a young one. The last was an *avocat*, named—no! never mind his name. How shall I delicately state the offence which had brought him there? He had broken part of the tenth commandment, and the whole of the seventh; and he was indignant beyond measure with his prosecutor, who had not called him out, like a gentleman, and given him a chance of breaking the sixth into the bargain! *Le lâche!* he had preferred, like a *canaille* as he was, to resort to civil revenges; and my friend had to "dree his weird," where I found him, for the term of six calendar months, while the fair and frail partner in his offence spent a similar period in similar seclusion on the opposite side of the establishment. We had not been acquainted ten minutes before he told me the whole of this story. He could not endure that a "gentilhomme Anglais," as Monsieur evidently was, should for a moment suppose him to be a mere petty-larceny villain. He had, he said, "beaucoup étudié l'Anglais;" and when I produced, for his edification, a fragment of the "Times" which I happened to have with me, he recognised it at once.

"Ah yays, I know him! de l'Immes!"

He was not a bad fellow at bottom; vain enough,

though, and as poor as Job: eking out his imprisonment by a little "fenilleton" penny-a-lining.

The first old man was a journeyman tailor, M. Michel. He was a poor, harmless small debtor, who accepted with enthusiasm, on the second day of our acquaintance, a proposition that he should mend one of my waistcoats which needed reparation, and was honestly reluctant to accept a two-franc piece which I forced upon him as an *honorarium*.

"Ah! Mon Dieu!" he said, when I at last overcame his scruples. "Je suis comme vous, Monsieur, J'aime à faire noblement les choses!" and summoning a lad who acted as prison errand-boy, he informed him, with much glee, that he had been lucky enough to do a little "coup de métier," and besought him not to forget to add a sumptuous desert of apples to his ordinary "repas" that afternoon.

Of the second old man, who was quite as poor, and not so cheerful as the tailor, we knew nothing. We called him, and spoke of him as "Monsieur." His name, and his offence, he kept carefully to himself. He would talk, when addressed; but ordinarily smoked his pipe in silence, and volunteered but small contribution to the liveliness of the society. The *avocat*, the tailor, and I, were chirping enough. M. Mongrolle's was the hand to which also the first-named owed his commitment; and we vituperated the old boy pretty handsomely in concert, as we walked together up and down our corridor.

About four o'clock it occurred to the turnkey, that Monsieur would probably not object to improve the prison-allowance by some addition from the *cuisine* of the neighbouring *traiteur*. Monsieur was only too glad to do so if allowed. Certainly, Monsieur was allowed. Good. Then Monsieur, though in prison, would "dine;" and there were set before him, accordingly, potage, cotelettes, volaille, salade, dessert; a good enough dinner in short, of which M. Michel and the other "Monsieur" divided, with much thankfulness, the *débris*. But the honest turnkey afterwards privately fell out with me for my extravagance; and instructed me how to order a thoroughly sufficient banquet at considerably smaller cost. Would many English turnkeys have done the like? Alas! I fear, but few. In that public prison of Rheims there was not a single official with whom I came in contact, who did not, in his way, do his best to be obliging, to spare me needless trouble and expense, and to make me as little uncomfortable as circumstances permitted. And I can't in conscience say that I was uncomfortable; though, of course, I ought to have been. I was young, and in good health; the weather was fine, dry, and warm; I had a few books, my cigar, three people to talk to, and that glorious old west-front, with its three portals, to look at. I was treated with perfect civility; had no business anywhere awaiting my coming; and felt, into the bargain, the conviction that this farce could not last very long. No. I was not uncomfortable, save only on account of one or two far away, if by chance they should come to know where I was.

Eight o'clock, P. M., and I had made no provision of candle! Twelve feet square of thick,

bare, cold, stone wall, darkness, and a door heavily bolted outside! Not altogether pleasant. Some touch of real *bond fide* imprisonment made itself felt at last. Bah! it can't last! "That's my comfort!" Had I been a geologist, I should have ripped open my mattress to see what kind of stone they used for stuffing at Rheims:—but, after all, what is a hard bed to an easy conscience? "Never slept guilt as Werner slept that night!"

With morning came again my gendarme. Monsieur was requested to step down, and present himself before the Substitut du Procureur du Roi, who had returned from his yesterday's *chasse*, and desired to see him in his "Parquet." M. Alexandre (I can't help thinking that good gendarme had somewhat predisposed him in my favour) received and treated me like a gentleman. A tall, fair, handsome man, in the prime of life, with a pleasant expression, and a frank cheerful manner—more like a well-bred country gentleman than a lawyer; but ready, quick, and precise in his questions; evidently well up to his work. He held in his hand (God knows how he got it) a paper from which he examined me. It was a perfect diary of my journey from Luxembourg to Rheims. He knew each hotel at which I had slept—each particular conveyance, public or private, by which I had travelled. He had got down in black and white that I had unsuccessfully endeavoured to "negotiate" a "valuable security" at Luxembourg; (it was true that a banker there had refused to change for me a 500 franc note of the bank of Strasbourg);—he had it recorded, that I had asked a fellow-traveller, in the coupé of the diligence, "whether we should have to show our passports at the gates of Verdun?" for which question my fellow-traveller, or some one for him, had been amiable enough to suggest an obvious motive unfavourable to myself. In short, all my most trivial doings for the last four days had been "set in a note-book, conned, and got by rote, to cast into my teeth." So well and thoroughly had it been done, that I could not help expressing, then and there, my admiration, not of the system, but of the way in which it was worked. M. Alexandre only smiled at the dubious compliment. He dismissed me, apparently well satisfied with my responses, promising to come up immediately to my room, and personally examine my "belongings," and with some complimentary phrases on the easy fashion in which I took my misfortune. His faith! if he had been in my place he should have been utterly *désolé*!

He was as good as his word, and did come immediately. Two minutes' inspection—though he went conscientiously through every item—was enough to show him that a grievous blunder had been committed. He requested me to entrust him, "in my interest," with my sister's letter, previously mentioned—(he understood English perfectly, though he did not speak it),—regretted that, as I was actually imprisoned, it was beyond his power to let me out without authorisation from his superiors—pledged himself to omit no endeavours to arrange "my affair" as soon as possible—and gave orders that any addition to my personal accommodation which

I might desire should be provided, if within their resources, by the officials of the prison. "He is no more the man they want than I am!" I heard him exclaim to the gendarme, as he closed my door; and he prefaced the assertion by one of those sinful ejaculations with which the Abbess of Andouillet, and Margarita the novice, ineffectually endeavoured in concert to overcome the obstinacy of the old mule.

Tuesday—Wednesday—the noon of Thursday arrived and passed without incident, save a visit from two long-cloaked flap-hatted brethren of some charitable fraternity, who sat upon my bed, with little or nothing to say for themselves, and stared at me with a calm, mild, non-impertinent, inoffensive curiosity.

I own, the novelty of the situation had by this time worn off, and I was beginning to get tired and impatient.

But about that noon of Thursday came again my gendarme, with an intimation that M. Alexandre wished onemore to see me. "Aha! you go to hear good news!" said the little avocat, as I descended.

M. Alexandre had now another paper in his hand—the real "signalement," forwarded from Frankfurt, of my confounded namesake. He was there described as a Jew, aged (in 1845) *sixty-five* years, and in particulars of personal appearance so different from mine, that M. Alexandre interrupted his comparison more than once to exclaim, "Bah! not the slightest resemblance!" I ventured to ask him how he accounted for the blundering Luxembourg "signalement" on which M. Mongrolle had acted, and why it was that the authorities of that place had not, then and there, themselves arrested my progress? "Ma foi!" he said, with the national shrug of the shoulders, "Je ne comprends pas la Police Allemande."

"And now," he added, "I don't know what to do with you. It is clear enough that you are not the man. I don't like to keep you here; but I have not, strictly, the power to let you out. I incur some responsibility (je m'engage un peu) in making you the offer, but, if you will give me your word not to leave Rheims till you hear from me, you shall be at liberty to return to your hotel."

Glady, of course, I would. A cell in the Lion d'Or would be but a nominal prison.

"No, no, not even so. Soyez libre—amusez vous. Do what you will; only do not quit Rheims till I authorise you." And so, with all sorts of polite speeches on both sides, we parted.

I think everybody was pleased when my liberation was known; and I wonder my hand was not shaken off before I got out of the prison. The landlord of the Lion d'Or congratulated me calmly on getting so soon out of an ugly scrape. The garçon who reinstalled me in my apartments vented his sympathy in scathing remarks on the stupidity of people "who were *bêtes* enough to box up (*coiffer*) like that a Monsieur with such a dressing-case as mine." Innocent garçon!

I am walking and smoking after dinner on the pavement in front of the cathedral. At the windows of the corridor, along which I had paced the previous evening, I see figures apparently endeavouring to attract my attention, and before

long I make out M. Michel and the anonymous "Monsieur." They bow, they smile, they gesticulate, they lay their hands upon their hearts. The fact is, that I have, in a note addressed to my little avocat, placed at the disposal of those two poor devils a small enough sum—some five-and-twenty francs a-piece. I did not know how much gratitude one could get for the money. There comes to the door of the gaol M. Bernard, the gaoler, full of smiles, and beckons me across to shake me violently by the hand.

"Mais, mon Dieu! M. Temple, mais vous êtes — généreux!"

The adverb he employed is not to be found in any dictionary of the French tongue.

I still keep two letters as souvenirs of my captivity. One, in which my little avocat returned thanks on behalf of the two *beneficiaires* (and which I would here print if it were not so full of compliments to myself); and one, of much politeness, from M. Alexandre, in which, on the morning after my liberation, he returned to me my passport and my sister's letter, stating that, as he had received authority from Paris to act in my case entirely on his own discretion, he lost no time in announcing that I was once more a perfectly free agent, and handsomely expressing his own regret at the share in my annoying detention, which the duties of his office had imposed upon him.

As I trotted out of the gates of Rheims, in a cabriolet-de-poste, that afternoon, *en route* for Paris, I met, and was glad to meet, my gendarme; and no grim-visaged functionary of his order ever broke into a smile so honest, or made a *ci-devant* gaol-bird a bow so profound, as the smile and the bow which accompanied his "Bon jour, Monsieur! Bon jour et bon voyage!"

My first visit at Paris was to the English embassy. I had, it appeared, in my hurry, addressed my letter to "The Right Hon. the Lord Cowley, Ambassador of England," &c. &c., forgetting, at the moment, that Lord Cowley had recently died, and that Lord Normanby, in his stead, represented Queen Victoria in the Faubourg St. Honoré. My letter was lying comfortably, unrepresented, in the porter's lodge.

"Ah, mon Dieu, Monsieur! Milord Cowley est mort!" said the portress, as she calmly handed back to me the wasted epistle.

Had I not turned up, or unless Lord Cowley's spirit had come "rapping" to claim his property, I suppose it would have lain there to this day. I demanded to see the Ambassador. He was out. Some *attaché* was, I presumed, at his post. Yes; but he was "souffrant," and could not see anybody just then. It was eleven o'clock, A.M., and I conclude that "souffrant" is French for "fast asleep, and don't want to be bothered;" for he showed no symptom of disorder when I *did* see him, three hours later, and when he affably said, "He was really very glad I was out without trouble."

But, then, I had an interview with the French Minister of the Interior, who heard my story patiently, complimented me on my French, and shrugged his shoulders wonderfully at the recital. And did not the "Ambassador of England" leave his card for me at Meurice's? And don't I keep it to this day? Doubtless it was great honour for the like of me—and it was all the compensation I ever got.

In the year 1850, I was once more at Frankfurt and Wiesbaden. Recollecting what had happened, I took the precaution of going to the police bureau at the former place, and getting their *visa* placed upon my passport. I mentioned my reasons, and was told I need be under no apprehension, as my namesake had been some time since caught and duly punished.

At Wiesbaden I re-entered the bureau of M. Junius Merlé. He did not know me till he caught the name in my passport, when he seized me violently by the hand.

"Ach! mein Gott!" he cried, "Heinrich Tempel! my tear sir, vy have you not shange your name? Dey vill have you once more!"

"No!" I answered, laughing; "now they have got the real man they will, I hope, let me alone."

"Who have got him?" said M. Merlé, quickly. "Vere have dey got him?"

"At Frankfurt," said I. "So, at least, the police there assured me."

"At Frankfurt!" said M. Merlé, tersely. "De police do lie! *Il court encore*. Dey have not catch him! Dey cannot catch him! Dey nevere sall catch him! No, nevere!"

HARRY LEROY TEMPLE.



MY FIRST LITERARY SUCCESS.

A STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT.

(To the Editor.)

SIR,—As I am aware of your deep sympathy for those who are ardently, though perhaps ineffectually, struggling onwards through thorny paths to the temple of Fame, I am confident that you will hail with delight the account I feel bound to lay before you of the perfect success of my first literary attempt, as detailed in the various items of the Balance Sheet which I have now the pleasure to indorse for the gratification of yourself as well as for the instruction and encouragement of your readers. "To make both ends meet" at one's first indulgence in so expensive a luxury as a Publisher, is a triumphant result, I am told, very rarely achieved; but when to this I can boast of superadding all that can enchant the eye and gratify the taste—the approving smiles of the softer sex, and the bland hospitalities of the men—I confess I am astounded at the ingratitude of so many of the younger votaries of the Muses, and would willingly infuse into their bosoms some portion of that enthusiasm for the speculations of literature which can never fail to animate my own. I hardly consider it necessary to mention the title of the work which has combined these results, as common conjecture will at once identify so remarkable a production; so, without further preface, I beg you to peruse the statement I enclose, in the hopes of being ably shortly to prove to you that my second attempt, like my first,

will be something more substantial than a mere *succès d'estime*.

I remain, &c.,

PHILOMATHE DE FOURCHETTE.

RATON SQUARE,
St. Orlan's Day.

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DUMB MOUTHS.

In his work of interpreting nature, man has put tongues into a good many dumb mouths, and extracted from them surprising utterances. The chemist listens to revelations whose significance is, as yet, only partly discernible. The geologist, breaking stones by the wayside, applies his ear to a more instructive shell than the one that murmurs of its ocean home. And other interpreters are similarly busy, fitting, with more or less ability, tongues into orifices previously silent. Yet, strangely enough, the dumb mouths of our species may be rendered almost eloquent, while less is known of the processes adopted in the workshops where true human tongues are found for them.

It is not a very long time since workshops of this kind were instituted. Before their establishment, deaf-born children grew up amongst hearing playmates, like the tare in the midst of good grain, which it resembled in its early stages, but from which further growth showed its dissimilarity.

A child, who hears, very soon imitates the sounds made to him by his nurse and others. From finding that particular sounds are made on particular occasions, he learns to connect meanings with words. By and by, as his stock of words and phrases increases, he becomes aware of increasing resemblances betwixt things. More hidden resemblances are pointed out to him, and gradually he comes to find that the limited experience of his own life serves as a set of recesses, into which language fitting keys, he can wander at will among things present, past, and future, and, practically, have the benefit of all men's thoughts.

Not so with the deaf-born child. Emotions excited in him by their proper stimulants pass over his mind like ripples on a lake, but are confined within himself by the boundary line, so to speak, of his deafness. Like winds blowing where they list, moods and impulses sweep across him, but he cannot tell whence they come nor trace whither they go. He cannot compare sensations with other children, and thus he is drilled into certain prevalent habits of thought, according to which the people round about him live and move and have their being. His deafness is like an envelope that entirely wraps up his mind, so that language, which is the instrument whereby the minds of persons who hear correspond with one another, has no effect on him.

An ingenious writer represents the human body as a tenement occupied temporarily by a soul which will vacate the premises on certain mishaps occurring. He describes his clay investment as "the house I live in." One might not inappropriately conceive of a deaf mute as the inmate of a prison rather than a dwelling-house rightly so called. From the grated window of his tower he looks out on life, and sees a perplexing phantasmagoria, but what it is all about he has no more notion than he has of how the tower he is in came to be there, or how he came to be in it.

How to put a tongue into the poor dumb mouth of a human being thus conditioned, is one of that bright cluster of discoveries that blaze away like

A FATAL GIFT.*



THERE are many wishes which we habitually conceive and express, without considering what the result would be were it possible to realise them, and what enormous consequences their realisation would entail. For instance, we are apt to exclaim, when perplexed by the conduct of others, "I'd give anything to know So-and-So's thoughts!" A facility of this kind seems, at the first blush, to promise an easy solution of our difficulties. The effect of realising this wish will, however, be illustrated in the following narrative.

I was sitting up late one Saturday night finishing my sermon for the following Sunday; and the completion of which, as was very frequently the case with my sermons, had been delayed till the last moment, owing to the pressure of other duties. The subject, which I had afterwards strange reasons for remembering, was *Faith*.

I had been endeavouring to point out that what men find so difficult in a religious sense, really forms the foundation of secular life. Take, for instance, our investments of money, our whole system of commercial credit, nay, higher than that, our dearest domestic relations, our best social affections. "Why, without Faith," I had written, "the world would come to a dead-lock; there be perfectly isolated. Faith was the cohesive I little thought that that very night would afford spirit of speculative contemplativeness.

months: a nice quiet gentleman, and no trouble; but from the first there was something strange in his manner. He always seemed to want to be to himself; me or my husband being in the room seemed to irritate him; and he never liked to be waited upon by anybody but our little girl. Since his illness he has had a screen drawn close round his bed, and he don't like anybody to see him: not even the doctor."

As I entered the room, where a shaded candle was dimly burning, in one corner I perceived a small camp-bed, almost concealed by a curtained screen. The woman mentioned my name, and withdrew. Then a voice, feeble but perfectly articulate, addressed me from behind the curtain.

"I am deeply your debtor for coming to see me at such a time." I expressed my hope that I might be of comfort to him. "Will you be good enough," he continued, "to take a seat near my bed, without disturbing the curtains; the request is strange, but I will explain it by-and-by."

I did as he desired.

"Perhaps," said he, "you have not forgotten my name: we met casually some years ago. I have not forgotten you! Your manner and appearance made a very deep impression on me; and when I chanced to hear that you were living in this district, I could not resist sending for you, in a sort of vain hope that you might afford me some alleviation."

I notified to him that my mission was rather to deal with spiritual affliction.

would be an end of concerted action; men would principle which bound together the human atoms." me a terrible illustration of what I had written in a

Just as I had finished my discourse, I heard a low, single rap at the street-door. The servant had gone to bed, so I undid the bolts, and looked out; and eventually looking down, I discovered a little scared girl not more than seven years old standing in the doorway.

"Please sir, Mr. C—— is very ill, and would like to see you."

"Mr. C——!" The name was not familiar to me; but, reflecting for a moment, I recollected meeting a gentleman of that name some years back. "What's the direction?" I asked.

"—, Adelphi Chambers," said the child.

"I'll be there directly," I replied (with a sigh, I confess), for the rain was coming down heavily, and I had had a hard day's parochial duty.

I pulled on my boots accordingly, and, with coat and umbrella, sallied forth. I was admitted into the house by a decent looking woman, who I presumed was the keeper of the chambers. She led me up-stairs—cheerless chamber-stairs; and I shuddered as she went before me with the feeble light.

"It is well for me to be here," I thought, "if I can in anywise comfort a poor creature dying without the support of home care, and affection."

I stopped the woman at the chamber-landing, and made her communicate to me some particulars of the case. The malady, it appeared, had quite puzzled the doctors; the woman herself thought Mr. C—— was troubled by something on his mind.

"He has lived here, sir," said she, "for about six

* It ought to be mentioned, in justice to both Author and Editor, that this story was in type some two or three weeks before the appearance of the July number of "Blackwood," which contains a story on the same theme.

"Ay," said he, "there's the source of the malady. I fear cure is beyond your power; but this night I am impelled by a strong desire to speak out the terrible secret which is consuming me. The last time we met was, if you recollect, at R——'s rooms; and the conversation even there turned on mesmerism. I was an enthusiastic mesmerist; I mesmerised some of the party, and you were much interested in the experiments. I remember your saying that this new discovery, whereby the troubled spirit might be wrapped in calm and released from pain, was a precious gift, but manifestly very liable to abuse, and should therefore be religiously exercised for the benefit of mankind, and not for the purposes of vain curiosity. I treated your words lightly at the time, but I have often thought of them since. I have learnt, in a terrible manner, that they were signally true.

"I was a most skilful mesmerist—in other words, by intense strength of will I could subdue the submitted volition of other people. The longer I exercised this gift, the stronger my power grew; at last I no longer required perfect submission from those on whom I operated. I could encounter mental opposition, and overcome it. You must bear patiently with me if I am somewhat exact and minute in describing this psychological process. At first I could only deal with a mind which thought of nothing but Me; then I acquired the power of driving away extraneous thought from the mind of the patient, and substituting the thought of Me exclusively. When I first acquired the latter power I could merely detect a mental opposition, which seemed like a painful depression cast on my own mind; but gradually, as my power grew, I could distinguish the opposing thought thrown like a reflection in a mirror on my own mind. Sometimes the thought was fear—sometimes a proud desire not to be overcome. As I was very careful to verify the truth of my discernment, I made my patients, after the trance was over, call to mind, as far as possible, their last thought before unconsciousness began; and invariably the thought which had existed in the mind of the patient had co-existed in my own mind.

"Would to God I had been contented thus far! It was in my power to benefit others largely by affording them freedom from pain, but the desire of being able to read the thoughts of men absorbed me. The slight progress I had made seemed but the germ of a mighty power of which the world had no conception. To be master of the motives of men's actions, to watch the gradual development of thought into action—above all, to be able to unmask false profession by a knowledge of the actual feeling—this was a gift conferring power incalculable.

"And out of much meditation upon this idea there grew a colossal fascination which grasped my whole soul.

"Alas! there is always more or less of isolation in the intensity of a great thought; when deeply seated, it dries up our sympathies and feeds upon the social inclinations of the heart.

"You know how the alchemists of the middle ages laboured in the hope of discovering the golden

secret of the physical world; how they spent time, and thought, and substance in the work. You have read, perhaps, Balzac's 'Recherche de l'Absolu?' I was striving for the golden secret of the mental world; no trouble was too great, no labour too hard for me; and as it was well known in the profession that I possessed the power of lulling pain, doctors would send for me at all times, day and night, to ease the anguish of patients whose maladies defied opium itself. I used to answer their call with the greatest readiness, for severe pain, by distracting the mind of the sufferer, increased the difficulty I had in subduing that mind to my own, and my power always grew stronger after opposition.

"For a long period I did not progress beyond the ability to feel with the greatest clearness the thoughts in my patients' minds prior to their lapsing into the trance. I attained my higher power suddenly. One day I had succeeded in alleviating a case of severe pain. The sufferer was the son of a very old man, and the father thanked me with tears in his eyes, grasping my hands.

"The doctor told me," said he, "that if we could subdue the pain he might live a few days yet—my other boy may reach home in time to see him."

"Instantly I recognised a strange thought in my mind, and I looked sternly in the old man's face.

"You hope your other son will return in time?"

"Ay, that I do," replied the old man somewhat flurried by my glance, "they are so fond of one another."

"I hurried from the house, jumped into a cab and drove to the Insurance Office. It happened that I was well acquainted with one of the clerks. I inquired whether So-and-So, mentioning the dying man's name, was insured there.

"He is," replied my friend, "and if he lives another two days a handsome bonus will be added to his policy."

"The clerk's words sufficed to tell me that I had acquired my long-sought power. While the old man was lavishing his thanks upon me in the sick room, I had felt his thought, 'that if his son lived two days longer, the policy would possess additional value.'"

"Surely, sir," said I, interrupting his narrative, "this was merely some casual coincidence of thought."

"Coincidence, indeed," replied the voice, mournfully, "but constant, not casual."

"From that day was given me the gift of reading human thought; a few, only very few, minds were sealed from my introspection. At this period the conditions and limitations of my power appeared to be these.—I had to hold the person's eyes steadily on mine, my mind required to be as much as possible in a passive state, vacant of thought, for positive thought on my part dimmed, or quite effaced, the thought reflected from the other mind.

"Ah! I tremble now when I think of it, the towering pride and exultation which beset me as I left that assurance office; as I strode along the

busy city streets, men seemed dwarfs, pigmies, in comparison with my power. I laughed as I thought of their comparative impotence. I was strangely moved, too full of strong feeling to exercise my power again that day; but when I got home I shut myself up in my room, and let exultation have full sway; and a great tide of thought at the wondrous consequences of my gift flowed through my excited mind."

I interrupted him at this point, and strongly insisted that this could only be some strange hallucination which ought to be fought against, prayed against, and resolutely conquered.

"Ay, ay!" was the reply; "I have hugged that idea, clung to it, prayed, fervently prayed, that it might be after all some vain delusion. No, no, that hope's passed, but you must hear my case out before you can suggest any remedy."

"Alas!" he continued, "my power has been verified hundreds of times. I have never been in error."

"I recollect even on that first day of exultation, after the first fervid burst was over, I trembled at my vast power. Even then a sense of desolation, of utter isolation overcame me. I had broken through the mental limits of mankind. I must traverse this new realm of knowledge without help—without sympathy; friendship could give me no comfort—wisdom no advice. I was sole tenant of a new world, without chart, without rule, without servicable law. I stood Alone, with my wretched feeble reason to uphold me. And yet at first glance conduct would seem very easy; thought is the parent of action: if we are cognisant of thought we can predict action. Not so! Thank God,—not so. I have seen men, good men in the world's estimation, yet the thoughts of their hearts, the promptings of passion, have been vile; but the world was right, those very men have after all acted well. I had seen the temptation to evil, and the strong habit of right, almost unthought, which in a moment thrust back evil and forced to virtuous action. Ah! I have seen noble thoughts, piety, grand aspirations. I could have humbled myself and knelt before some men, and yet all this greatness has been lost in mean and selfish acts."

"Alas! I only beheld the thoughts of men, to become mystified by their subsequent actions. I trusted, where I was deceived; I doubted where I might have trusted; mankind perpetually falsified my predictions. What wonder? I had only my poor trivial unaided reason to guide me amid the infinite complexities of the soul. The consequent labour of attempted analysis has worn my mind and body. In the personal intercourse of life I dare not trust; I may not doubt. Oh! I have prayed for faith—prayed that my awful vision might be mercifully darkened, that I might be led back to that open judgment-ground of mortals,—positive acts."

At this point Mr. C. seemed somewhat exhausted, and asked me to give him the lemonade. I was very much moved by his strange confession—the gloom of the room, the dead silence of the large house, broken only by the voice of the hidden speaker, feeble at times, then suddenly breaking out in painful energy—the thin, worn hand

stretched through the curtain to grasp the glass. I felt that this extraordinary delusion, evidently deep seated, was not to be uprooted by mere emphatic contradiction or ridicule. I hoped by inducing him to relate some of the experiences upon which he had built his terrible conclusion, I might convince him of some fallacy, of some erroneous assumptions in his train of argument.

"I think," said I, addressing him, "I understood you to say that you have never revealed this faculty of yours to any one?"

"What!" he exclaimed vehemently, "and let men know my power, so that they should cast me forth as an unhallowed spy—all shrinking from me, as some involuntarily shrunk from Dante, declaring he had walked in Hell—no! I was isolated enough without that."

"Still," said I, "you were certainly wrong, because another person, free from that morbid feeling which exists in your mind, might have been able to show you that this coincidence of thought, upon which you base your supposed power, was merely the natural effect of common circumstances upon two minds. Relate to me one of your strongest instances."

He assented to my proposal.

"I had an old uncle," said he, "who was very well off. I was his favourite nephew, the son of a sister who had been very dear to him. He was a kind, good old man, somewhat sensitive in matters of courtesy and attention. When I grew so entirely absorbed in my great idea, I gave up all social intercourse, and entirely neglected my uncle as well as the rest of my friends. People used to tell me that a young cousin of mine, home from his first voyage, was staying at my uncle's house; that I risked my chance of after-fortune by my imprudent conduct. I paid attention to none of these warnings, and one night I was sent for in a great hurry; my uncle had had a sudden fit, and was fast sinking. I hastened to the house; on entering the room I found my uncle was in a heavy dose of unconsciousness, but on my approaching the bed, he feebly opened his eyes and gazed vacantly at me without the slightest sign of recognition."

"He does not know you," said my cousin.

"But he did know me! the body was fast sinking, yet the mind was still active. I felt, as I looked deeply in his eyes, his thought of returning tenderness—Janet's only son—and then the terrible regret that *that* was not signed. In my desperation I seized pen and paper—I thrust the pen into his hand, and clasped the yielding fingers on it."

"It is too late!" said my cousin.

"No, no!" I replied.

"It was too late. The pen fell away from the nerveless hand, but I felt the intense inward struggle which strove in vain to reanimate the failing strength of the dying man."

"Allow me to observe," said I, "that I cannot consider this as any proof of your power—you knew that your uncle's affections were cooled towards you, that your cousin would in all probability be his heir—all the rest was merely the effect of excited imagination."

"You are too hasty, sir," was the reply to my objection. "We found, on searching my uncle's

papers, a will in his desk, making my cousin his heir, to my entire exclusion, but so convinced was I of the truth of what I had felt pass in my uncle's mind, that I made unabated search through all the papers, even waste papers—and in the waste paper basket, thrown in by the servant who cleared the room, I took up a common circular which, from its date, my uncle must have received the very morning of his seizure, and turning over to the blank sheet, I discovered in his handwriting the draft of a codicil which would have made me joint-heir with my cousin; but it was nothing more than a draft.

"Again, sir! I knew my cousin was a young man of generous feeling—I say I knew this, because when we discovered the will, I saw his inward feeling of surprise, his regret that I had been entirely excluded, and his fear lest I should think he had been undermining my credit with my uncle. Surely, I thought, he will be affected now by this evidence of my uncle's feeling, and will to some extent act upon it. I gave him the memorandum to read. I watched him very intently. After reading he was silent awhile, and then I saw to my astonishment great exultation in his mind that the document was legally invalid. Hard words were rising to my lips—thank God! I spoke them not—with utterance sudden as I grasped, he swore to act upon the codicil. I grasped his hands, expressing my deep sense of his noble conduct. 'Tell me, Harry,' said I, at length, 'did not you at first feel glad that the codicil was not signed?'

"How the deuce did you guess that?" he replied, 'I did feel glad for a moment!—but I kicked that thought to the devil!'

It was clearly hopeless to try to satisfy Mr. C— of the fallacy of his idea through his own narratives. He had evidently squared all his proofs with such strange ingenuity. I trusted, therefore, that something might occur under my own cognisance which would enable me by the impartial use of fact to satisfy him of his error.

"What was wealth to me?" he continued—"my terrible power was growing, I no longer required contact of vision; merely personal presence unobstructed within a certain distance sufficed. To possess any peace of mind in the presence of others I am forced to conceal myself, to veil in my vision. I told you there were some few who were sealed from my power; these were the friends I loved best—I know not why, or how—perhaps from that strong element of faith which is contained in true love. Alas! one by one, my power gradually prevailed over these. I was forced to leave them; the world thought me fickle and inconstant; I could not help that; it was so utterly wearisome to hear in one's bosom the thoughts of others—so dreadful to behold continually the anatomy of the soul, to be perpetually reasoning out men's acts from their thoughts. You know how pleasant are the words of friendly intercourse, how refreshing is the sound of friendly talk, but here was the climax of my misery—I felt the idea before the tongue spoke it—the human voice was never fresh to me, it was always telling an old tale, falling flat and sickening on the ear.

"At last there was only one being over whose

mind I was powerless—Oh! how desperately I clung to her—how earnestly I prayed of her to accept me. It was ecstatic, that doubt of mine, while I waited for her reply; that thrill of uncertainty, as I gazed into her dark eyes, and rejoiced in their glorious mystery—and then her sweet voice falling fresh, oh! so fresh upon my ears—her words, sweeter to me than softest music, springing from an unfathomed heart, and assuring me, with sincere emotion, that that heart was mine. I loved her with all the happiness of faith! I have no words to describe the intensity of my feeling. Do you recollect that German ballad—

"I knew but heaven in Wilhelm's kiss,
And all is hell without it?"

"That was my love for her! ay, and intensified far beyond the poet's meaning—it was the last bond that held me to the common joys of mankind. They might well say I worshipped her—I could sit for hours gazing silently on the play of her eyes, listening to the slightest things she uttered. I can never make you understand what her voice was to me—her voice, the only voice in the world I could bear to hear. I used to tremble at the thought of losing her. Not by death—for she had all the chances of youth and strength, but from my terrible power. I reasoned thus: love for a while had saved me some friends; but I loved this girl far beyond friendship, and love would be her shield. Again, I had observed that the smallest feeling of doubt towards any friend had been the commencement of my fatal vision—but doubt towards her was impossible, for I loved her with the strongest faith.

"Nevertheless I was to be isolated from all the world—doubt did come one day. Clara had a cousin, a wild young fellow, who had been shipped by his family to Australia for the double purpose of reformation and fortune. It seems he had been always fond of her, but her friends would never listen to his proposals. Some time after our engagement he returned to England, having made a good round sum in the gold scramble. I met him at a party to which I had accompanied Clara and her mother. I saw on our introduction that he had an aversion to me, and independently of this I was not prepossessed by his manner and appearance. I told Clara my feeling, and she defended him, as I thought, rather too warmly.

"In the course of the evening, while I was talking to Clara, he came and stood near us; our conversation, which had been in reference to him, was silenced by the singing. I know not what induced me to direct my attention towards him—he was gazing earnestly on Clara; I felt the violent love which was raging in his bosom, and the wild lawless inclination to make her his. Involuntarily I turned on Clara. Cursed doubt was in my mind arising out of our previous conversation. In an instant I beheld her thought—tenderness and love towards her cousin!

"And then by a new access of my power the thoughts of both those minds were mirrored in mine—Oh it cuts very sharp to know a rival's love, but think of the bewildering torture of feeling that rival's love, and the love felt towards him at work in your own breast!

"In my pain and anger I was advancing towards this man. Then flashed on my mind with a force before which the previous feeling with all its intensity shrivelled away, the terrible fact that my last hope was gone. I had read her mind—I must be alone henceforth."

The voice gradually dropped into indistinctness—I listened, there was a dead silence. I drew back the curtain—he had fainted—poor C—! how sadly altered from the young man I recollected but a few short years back. The light fell horizontally on his pale face, on the ridges revealed and the hollows in dark shade worn by the fever—his fatal imagination.

* * *

C— permitted me to state his real condition to the doctor. This gentleman was a very clever, clear-headed, and benevolent man, and took immense interest in the case. Both of us reasoned with C— upon his hallucination. I strove on religious grounds to show him the improbability of such a condition being divinely permitted. We both of us blamed him for having doubted on such frivolous grounds his betrothed's love and fidelity.

He told us it was this last struggle which had so completely worn away his health. This love for her cousin, as far as he had seen, was only a passing thought; but alas! his joy in her was at an end; her voice had lost its sweetness, her eyes their mysterious delight—he dared not bind himself to a life of perpetual attraction and repulsion, beholding all the fluctuations of her thoughts, yet never knowing her true feelings. Love was impossible without faith.

He had broken off the match, offering what compensation money could afford—this had been proudly refused, but he had made his will in her favour.

We urged upon him that he ought at the least to take the lady's word whether or not the thought he had mentioned had ever existed in her mind. With some difficulty, upon giving our pledge to act with fairness in the matter, we induced him to agree to this proposition.

We had every hope that her disavowal would afford us a lever to uproot his strange convictions.

At C—'s desire I called upon Miss M—. I saw her and her mother. She, poor girl, evidently loved C— still, and was much distressed to hear of his dangerous condition. It appeared that he had excused himself for breaking off the match, on the ground of some hereditary malady, and he had blamed himself in strong terms for ever making her an offer. From what Mrs. M— said, she seemed to regard C— with pity rather than with resentment, notwithstanding the sad trial it had been to her daughter. I stated the object of my visit; that it would afford much consolation to C—, if Miss M— would visit him, and answer a certain doubt which existed in his mind; it was right for me to state that the question which would be asked was of a painful nature, but I was quite convinced that one true word from Miss M— would explain the whole matter at once. Miss M— and her mother readily agreed to my request.

It was a very painful meeting. The curtain had been drawn back, Miss M—, her mother,

and the doctor stood at the end of the bed; I was at C—'s side, and as he was very weak he requested me to speak. After recalling to Miss M—'s recollection the events of the particular evening (it was less than a year from that day), and stating that C— made no question of the sincerity of her love (he also speaking to the same effect himself), I asked her whether she could remember at the particular moment just before C— fainted in the room, experiencing a feeling of regard towards her cousin?

C—, in breathless suspense, bent forward in his bed, and regarded her intently. She, poor girl, was deeply moved, blushing crimson. Her mother interposed with warmth, and denied my right to ask such a question. I expostulated, and prayed of her to allow her daughter to answer.

The doctor suddenly moved forward: C— had fallen back insensible! And then Miss M—, hurrying to the bedside, and kneeling as she clasped C—'s hand, confessed that the thought had passed through her mind—"a morbid folly," she cried, "the recollection of childish days, of what people had said, as boy and girl, of their marrying;" she had never approved of her cousin's conduct since he had grown up—she had refused his hand but a month ago.

From this time C— gradually sank.

G. U. S.

TOM ROCKET.



Sandiger, our president, sitting and smoking his pipe of those times, and said he, "It happened to my father, and that's how I came to know all about it."

I do not think you would like me to give you the story just as Mr. Josh gave it us; you might get vexed with his pipe. He always smokes a very long clay pipe, which seems to require a great deal of management to get it to draw properly. He never says more than about six words at a time; then he has a pull at his pipe, and goes on again, giving you a whiff of words, and then a whiff of smoke, whilst you are turning them over in your mind and wondering what is coming next. About every tenth whiff, he takes his pipe out of his mouth and looks gravely into the bowl; then he takes the tobacco-stopper, presses down the ashes carefully, and shakes them out on the hob; then he looks into it again, and, if it is all right, he dips the shank end into his brandy and water, looks into the bowl a third time, and gives it a rub with his cuff. Next, he opens his mouth wide, puts the sealing-wax end in, closes his lips upon it slowly, and then goes on again with his story, six words at a time as before. He is reckoned a very emphatic speaker in these parts, is our president. And so, of course, he is; but I must confess, out of his hearing, that all this fidgetting, these pauses, and puffings, and stoppings, and rubbings, and lookings at nothing at all, in the middle of a story, irritate me sometimes to that degree that I feel inclined to run at him, knock his pipe out of his mouth, and strike at him to get on faster—that I do!

It would be as well, perhaps, then, if I were to quote his own words as nearly as I can recollect them straight on, and put his pipe out.

My father (continued Mr. Josh), used often to say that he would like to see the man who

it happened to my father," said the tall man in the chimney corner, "and that's how I came to know all about it."

The chimney corner is that of the Rising Sun, a pleasant little roadside inn, about two miles from Northampton, and the tall man is the president of a bowling-club that met there, once a fortnight, principally to dine. The "it," of which the speaker's relative was the hero, is the adventure which forms the subject of this narrative.

The reason why we were listening to stories, instead of playing bowls, was simply this. One of the heaviest thunder-storms that I can remember, broke over the Rising Sun that afternoon. All during dinner we could see great ragged, copper-coloured clouds banking up against the wind, and the cloth was hardly off the table, when spit! spat! spat! against the diamond-shaped window-panes came a few heavy hail-stones, then came the lightning, then came the thunder, and then came the rain, as though it had not rained for ten years, and was determined to make up for lost time. So there was nothing for it but to sit still and amuse ourselves, as best we could, in-doors; and the conversation having turned upon travelling, and the dangers of the road before railways were invented, Mr. Josh

could rob him upon the highway, and one fine November evening he *did* see him.

You young fellows who are accustomed to be whisked away a hundred miles between your breakfast and your dinner by an express-train, and grumble vastly if you are ten minutes behind time, don't know much about what travelling was in 1795—cross country travelling specially. Folks did not leave their homes then if they could help it. It's all very fine to talk about the beauties of the country, and the delights of a change of scene, but when there are more highwaymen than scavengers or police about, the roads are not so very charming, I can tell you. Why, it was a week's journey from here to London and back, in those days! and if you got home with whole bones and a full purse, you were not in a hurry to tempt Providence and Tom Rocket a second time.

Tom Rocket was a highwayman. No one ever christened him Tom, and his father's name was not Rocket. When he was tried for his life at Warwick Assizes, he was arraigned as Charles Jackson, and they were particular about names then. If you indicted a man as Jim, and his true name was Joe, he got off; and when the law was altered—so that they could set such errors right at the trial—people, leastwise lawyers, said that the British Constitution was being pulled up, root and branch. But that's neither here nor there.

I cannot tell you how it was that he came to be known as Tom Rocket, and if I could, it would not have anything to do with my story. For six years he was the most famous thief in the Midland counties, and for six years no one knew what he was like. He was a lazy fellow, was Tom; he never

came out except when there was a good prize to be picked up, and he had his scouts and his spies all over the place to give him information about booty, and to warn him of danger. But to judge by what people said, he was "on the road" at half-a-dozen different places at once every day of his life; for you see when any one was robbed of his property, or found it convenient so to account for it, why he laid it upon Tom Rocket as a sort of excuse for giving it up easily, because, you see, no one thought of resisting Tom. So it was, that all sorts of conflicting descriptions of his person got abroad. One said that he was an awfully tall man and had a voice like thunder; another that was a mild little man, with black eyes and light hair. He was a fiery fat man, with blue eyes and black hair with some; he had a jolly red face—he was as pale as death—his nose was Roman one day, Grecian or a snub the rest. His dress was all the colours of the rainbow, and as for his horse!—that was of every shade and breed that was ever heard of, and of a good many more beside, that have yet to be found out. He wore a black half-mask, but somehow or other it was always obliging enough to slip off, so as to give each of his victims a full view of his face, only no two of them could ever agree as to what it was like.

My father was a Gloucestershire man. He stood six feet three in his stockings, and measured thirty-six inches across the chest. He could double up a half-crown between his finger and thumb, and was as brave as a lion. So, many a time and oft, when any one talked of the dangers of the road, he would set his great teeth together, shake his head, and say that he should like to see the man that could rob him on the highway; and, as I said before, he *did* see him, and it was Tom Rocket.

My father was a lawyer, and was, at the time I have mentioned, engaged in a great tithes cause that was to be tried at Warwick Spring Assizes. So, shortly before Christmas, he had to go over to look up the evidence. There was no cross-country coach, so he rode; and being, as I have said, a brave man, he rode alone. He transacted his business; and my poor mother being ill, and not liking to leave her alone longer than he could help, he set out to ride home again about half-past nine o'clock that same evening. It was as beautiful a winter's night as ever you were out in. His nag was a first-rate hunter, as docile as a dog, and fit to carry even his weight over, or past anything. He had a brace of excellent pistols in his holsters; and he jogged along, humming a merry tune, neither thinking nor caring for any robber under the sun. All of a sudden, it struck him that the pretty barmaid of an inn just out of Warwick town, where he had stopped to have a girth that he had broken patched together, had been very busy with those self-same pistols; and suspecting that she might have been tampering with them, he drew the charges and re-loaded them carefully. This done, he jogged on again as before.

He had ridden about ten miles, when he came to a wooden bridge that there was in those days over the Avon. Just beyond it rose a stiffish

hill, at the top of which was a sudden bend in the road. Just as my father reached this turn, a masked horseman suddenly wheeled round upon him, and bade him "*Stand and deliver!*" It was Tom Rocket! In a second my father's pistols were out, cocked, and snapped within a yard of the highwayman's chest; but, one after the other, they missed fire! The pretty barmaid—a special favourite of Tom's—was too sharp to rely upon the old dodge of drawing the balls, or damping the charge: she thrust a pin into each touch-hole, and then broke it short off.

"Any more?" Tom inquired, as coolly as you please, when my father's second pistol flashed in the pan.

"Yes!" shouted my father, in a fury, "one for your nob!" And seizing the weapon last used by the muzzle, he hurled it with all his might and main at Rocket's head. Tom ducked, the pistol flew over the hedge, and my father, thrown out of balance by his exertion, lost his seat, and fell heavily on the grass by the road side. In less time than it takes to say so, Tom dismounted, seized my father by the collar, and presenting a pistol within an inch of his face as he lay, bade him be quiet, or it would be the worse for him.

"You've given me a deal of trouble," said Tom, "so just hand over your purse without any more ado, or by G—! I'll send a bullet through your skull—just there;" and he laid the cold muzzle of his pistol on my father's forehead just between his eyes.

It is bad enough to have to look down the barrel of loaded fire-arms upon full cock, with a highwayman's finger upon the trigger; but to have the cold muzzle pressed slowly upon your head—ugh—it makes me creep to think of it.

My father made a virtue of necessity, and quietly gave up his purse.

"Much good may it do you," he said; "for there's only three-and-sixpence in it."

"Now for your pocket-book," said Tom, not heeding him.

"Pocket-book?" inquired my father, turning a little pale.

"Aye, pocket-book!" Tom repeated; "a thick black one; it is in the left-hand pocket of your riding-coat."

"Here it is," said my father, "you know so much about it that perhaps you can tell what its contents are worth?"

"I'll see," Tom replied, quietly taking out and unfolding half a dozen legal-looking documents.

"They are law-papers—not worth a rush to you or any one else," said my father.

"Then," Tom replied, "I may tear them up," and he made as though he would do so.

"Hold! on your life!" my father shouted, struggling hard, but in vain, to rise.

"Oh! they are worth something, then," said Tom, with a grin.

"It would take a deal of trouble to make them out again," my father replied sulkily,—"that's all."

"How much trouble?" Tom inquired with a meaning look.

"Well," my father answered, "I suppose I

know what you are driving at. Hand me them back and let me go, and I promise to send you a hundred pounds when and where you please."

"You know very well that these papers are worth more than a hundred," said Tom.

"A hundred and fifty, then," said my father.

"Go on," said Tom.

"I tell you what it is, you scoundrel," cried my father, "I'll stake five hundred against them if you'll loose your hold, and fight me fairly for it."

Tom only chuckled.

"Why what a ninny you must take me for," he



said. "Why should I bother myself fighting for what I even get without."

"You're a cur, that's what you are," my father shouted in a fury.

"Don't be cross," said Tom, "it don't become you to look red in the face. Now, attend to me," he continued in an altered tone, "do you see that bridge? Well! There's a heap of stones in the centre, isn't there? Very good! If you will place

five hundred guineas in gold, in a bag, amongst those stones at twelve o'clock at night this day week, you shall find your pocket-book and all its contents in the same place two hours afterwards."

"How am I to know that you will keep your word," my father replied, a little softened by the hope of regaining, even at so heavy a price, the papers that were invaluable to him.

"I'm Tom Rocket," replied the robber, securing the pocket-book upon his person, "and what I mean, I say, and what I say, I stick to. Now, get up, and mind," he added, as my father sprang to his feet, "my pistols don't miss fire."

"I shall live to see you hanged," my father muttered, adjusting his disordered dress.

"Shall I help you to catch your horse?" Tom asked politely.

"I'll never rest till I lodge you in a jail," said my father, savagely.

"Give my compliments to your wife," said Tom, mounting his horse.

"Confound your impudence," howled my father.

"Good night," said Tom, with a wave of his hand, and turning sharp round, he jumped his horse over the fence and was out of sight in a moment.

It was not quite fair of my father, I must own (Mr. Josh continued, after a pause), but he determined to set a trap for Tom Rocket, baited with the five hundred guineas, at the bridge. He posted up to London, saw Bradshaw, a famous Bow-street runner, and arranged that he and his men should come down, and help to catch Tom; but, just at the last moment, Bradshaw was detained upon some important government trial, and so another runner, Fraser, a no less celebrated officer, took his place.

It was settled that the runners should come by different roads, and all meet at a way-side inn about five miles from the bridge, at eight o'clock p.m. on the day my father's pocket-book was to be returned. An hour afterwards they were to join him on the road, three miles further on. Their object, you see, in taking this roundabout course was to baffle Tom's spies and accomplices, and to get securely hid about the appointed spot long before the appointed time.

My father was a little late at the place of meeting; but when he arrived there he could see no one about, except a loutish-looking countryman in a smock-frock, who was swinging on a gate hard by.

"Good noight, maister," said the yokel.

"Good night to you," replied my father.

"Can ye tell me who this yer letter's for," said the yokel, producing a folded paper.

My father saw in a moment that it was his own letter to Bradshaw.

"Where did you get that?" he said quickly.

"Ah!" replied the yokel, replacing it in his pocket, "that ud be tellins. Be yer expecting anybody?"

"What's that to you?" said my father.

"Oh, nought," said the yokel, "only a gentleman from London—"

"Ha!" cried my father; "what gentleman?"

"Will a name beginning with F. suit you?" asked the yokel.

"Fraser?" The word fell involuntarily from my father's lips.

"That's the name," replied the yokel, jumping down from his seat, and changing his tone and manner in a moment. "I'm Fraser, sir, and you're Mr. Sandiger, as has been robbed of a

pocket-book containing valuable papers; and we're going to catch Tom Rocket as has got it—that's our game, sir. All right, sir; and now to business."

"But where are your men?" my father asked, when Fraser had explained the reason for his disguise.

"All right again, sir," said the runner, "they will join us. We have not much time to lose, so please to lead the way."

So my father led the way, followed by Fraser; and by the time that they came in sight of the bridge they had been joined by four London officers, in different disguises, and from different directions. One appeared as a tramp, one as a pedlar, another as a gentleman's servant leading a horse, and the fourth as a soldier. No one could have guessed that they had met before, much less that they were engaged together in a pre-concerted scheme. My father gave Fraser great credit for the dexterous way in which he had collected his forces.

The bridge upon which the money was to be placed, consisted of two arches across the river, and was joined on either side by a long sort of causeway, built upon piles over meadows that in the winter time were generally covered with water. It so happened, that the very next morning after the robbery heavy rain set in, and soon the floods were out, so that there was no way of getting on the bridge but by going along the causeway, which extended a distance of a hundred yards, sloping down gradually to the road, on each side of the river. This causeway was built of wood. At some places the timbers were covered with earth and stones, but at others the roadway had worn out and they were bare, so that anyone looking up from underneath, could see who was passing overhead. Mr. Fraser's sharp eye took in the position in a moment. He got two hurdles out of a field close by, and with some rope, that he had brought for another purpose, fastened them to the piles, so that they hung like shelves between the roadway and the flood, one at each side of the bridge, and about twenty yards from it. This was his plan: two of his men were to lie hidden on each hurdle, whilst he and my father, in a boat that was concealed beneath the main arch of the bridge, unseen themselves, could watch the heap of stones where the money was to be placed, and the stolen pocket-book left in exchange for it. As soon as Tom Rocket, or any of his friends, removed the bag in which the gold was packed, Fraser was to whistle, and his men were to climb from their hiding places, and secure whoever it might be. If he leaped over the railing of the causeway, and took to the water, there was the boat in which to follow and capture him.

Mr. Fraser was very particular to practise his allies in springing quickly from their place of concealment, and in impressing upon them and my father the necessity of all acting together, keeping careful watch, and strict silence. "And now, sir," he said to my father, as a distant clock chimed a quarter to twelve, "it's time to get to our places and to bait the trap, so please to hand me the bag that I may mark it, and some of the

coins, so as to be able to identify them at the trial." He had made up his mind, you see, to nail Master Tom this time.

My father gave him the bag, saw him write upon it, and make some scratches on about a dozen of the guineas, and then my father let himself down into the boat, in which he was immediately joined by the runner.

"It's all right," said Fraser, in a low tone.

"Do you think he will come?" whispered my father.

"Certain," replied Fraser, "but, hush! we must not talk, sir, time's up."

For three mortal hours did my father sit in that boat, and the runners lay stretched out on the broad of their backs upon those hurdles watching for Tom Rocket to come for his money; and for three mortal hours not a soul approached the bridge, not a sound but the wash of the swollen river was heard. By the time that the clock struck three, my father, who had been nodding for the last twenty minutes, fell fast asleep as he sat covered up in his cloak, for it was a bitter cold night; but was very speedily aroused by hearing Fraser cry out that they were adrift.

Adrift they were, sure enough. The rope that held them had been chafed against the sharp corner of a pile (so Mr. Fraser explained) till it broke, and away went the boat, whirling round and round in the eddies of the river, fit to make any one giddy. So strong was the stream, that they were carried a mile and a half down it, before they could get ashore. My father was for returning directly to the bridge, and so was Fraser; but, somehow or other, they lost each other in the dark; and when my father arrived there, having run nearly all the way, he found, to his great surprise, that the officers had left. He rushed to the heap of stones, and there the first thing that caught his eye was his pocket-book—the money was gone!

Lord, how he did swear!

Determining to have it out with the runners for deserting their posts, he hurried on to the inn where they had met, and were to pass the night. He knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked again, louder. No answer. He was not in the very best of tempers, as you may guess; so he gave the door a big kick. In it flew; and a sight met his view that fairly took away his breath. Tied into five chairs, hand and foot, trussed up like so many Christmas turkeys, with five gags in their five mouths, and their five pair of eyes glaring at him, owlishly, sat the real Mr. Fraser and his four Bow Street runners. Tom Rocket had managed the business at the bridge himself!

How he managed to get scent of the plot, and to seize the officers, all together, just at the nick of time, my father never could find out, and no one knows to this day.

Upon examining his pocket-book, my father found all his documents, and a paper on which was written these words:—

"By destroying these writings I could have ruined you. In doing so, I should have injured your client, whom I respect. For his sake I keep my word, though you have played me false.

TOM ROCKET."

Here Mr. Josh paused, and smoked for some time in silence.

"And what became of Tom?" asked one of the company.

"Well," replied Mr. Josh, "after having been tried three times, and getting off upon some law quibble on each occasion, he—who had robbed the worth of thousands of pounds, and escaped—was executed at Nottingham for stealing an old bridle! And now I've done, gentlemen all. I looks to—wards you."

So our worthy president "looked to—wards us," and finished his brandy-and-water at a gulp. Then, finding that the rain had given over, we thanked him for his story, and all adjourned to the bowling-green.

ALEANY FONBLANQUE, JUNR.

VANITAS, VANITAS!

I AM not much given to moralising, especially upon subjects over which sages have moralised ever since human nature has defined itself as human nature. But, some years ago, I was forcibly plunged into a moralising mood upon the very trite and well-worn subject that heads this paper, by a spectacle which I saw on my first visit to the picturesque old city of Salzburg. Perhaps the train of thought, which it induced, had been already slightly forced upon my mind by a previous circumstance. I had been wheedled, contrary to my usual creed and my usual wont, into being lionised about the place, its old castle, and its panoramic views of mountain and plain, ravine and torrent, by a German friend. Among other of the sights of Salzburg, he had insisted upon my being presented to the lady, then living, who had once been the wife of one of the greatest composers of all time. The introduction had taken place through the intermediation of her second husband, who announced her to us as "the inconsolable widow of Mozart!" This self-immolation at the shrine of vanity had possibly already prepared me to murmur the words—"vanitas, vanitas, omnia vanitas!"

We followed up this singular tribute to the memory of the dead, by a visit to the picturesque churchyard of St. Peter's, in which most of the notabilities of Salzburg are interred. A more romantic burying-ground—unless, indeed, that belonging to the village of Hallstadt on the lake of the same name in the Austrian Saalkam-mergat—can scarcely be conceived. But I am not going into descriptive raptures now. At the foot of a staircase, which is cut in the precipitous rocks, and leads to an old hermitage on the heights above, the traditional residence of St. Rupert, the first Bishop of Salzburg, and hollowed out of these same rocks, was a small grotto-like chapel, the

entrance to which was opened to us by an old monk, the guardian of the sacred ground. The first sight that forcibly attracted observation in this species of chapel, was an accumulation of skulls enclosed in glass-cases, and ranged in rows one above the other along the walls. They were those, we were told, of the privileged personages who had been permitted burial on that spot, and lay in death beneath. Singular enough was this strange custom! but more singular still the fact, that, above each skull was placed the painted portrait, in living colour, of its possessor before the flesh had rotted away from the ghastly bones, with the name it had borne in life, duly registered in gilt letters on the picture. Our natural inclination was to suppose that a spirit of stern morality had dictated this fearful practice, that the close approximation of the semblance of what had been life with the hideous reality of the work of death, was intended as a practical application of the motto—*Respicere finem*—that the dead were thus used to read a visible warning-sermon to the living they had left on earth. We were communicating such sentiments one to the other, when I observed a mocking smile upon the lips of the old monk. Upon being questioned he shrugged his shoulders, and then laughed aloud. It was considered a great honour, he told us, to have the skull and portrait placed in the chapel; that only the nobly born and wealthy were allowed the proud privilege; that a considerable sum of money was paid for this exclusive advantage; that he was not aware that there was any intention, in any man's mind, of reading a warning lesson or preaching a practical sermon upon the nothingness of life, or the frailty of beauty, or the charms that are bestowed but to wither into so terrible a consequence; but that he knew very well that people were very vain, even before death, of the purchased privilege of having their skulls thus exposed, and that the relations, after death, were always very vain of the exposure. No wonder, then, that this coquetry with Death sent me away moralising upon the trite old topic—*vanitas, vanitas, omnia vanitas!*

I had already seen in the receptacles, called dead-houses, in Roman Catholic Germany, where the dead are by law exposed to public view, before their final hiding away beneath the earth—I had already seen, I say, the yellow waxy cheeks of dead old women tricked out with false curls, and highly rouged. I had seen the beauty, cut off in her prime, lying on her last bed, decked in the gayest ball-attire, with her chaplet of roses on her head. I had seen the officer of state and the military man dressed (in death) in the stiff embroidered pomp of worldly pride and glory. I had seen in the streets of Naples the exposed corpse borne aloft to burial, in gawdy attire, with the terrible caricature

of life in its painted face. In all these was the repulsive evidence of the last vanity in death. But nothing so much as the strange spectacle in the

chapel of St. Peter's, at Salzburg, had preached so loudly the words of the preacher—*Vanitas, vanitas, omnia vanitas!* J. PALGRAVE SIMPSON.